

## Comments on the National Capital Planning Commission's Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative

### **Introduction:**

The National Place Cohort ("Cohort") includes: The National Theatre Foundation on behalf of The National Theatre, Quadrangle Development Corporation, Inc. on behalf of 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue (aka "One Freedom Plaza") and National Place Office buildings and shops, and the J.W. Marriott Hotel, all located within the 1300 block of Pennsylvania Avenue on the north side of Freedom Plaza (see Exhibit A).

The Cohort is excited to support NCPC's mission to revitalize Pennsylvania Avenue and activate the Avenue's public realm and enhance its public space. We are grateful to Nelson Byrd Woltz, Landscape Architects, for their help in preparing our comments that follow which focus primarily on the Western End of Pennsylvania Avenue, centered around Freedom Plaza, due to its proximity and intimate connection to our operations in the 1300 block.

### **Important Considerations:**

Three matters of great importance for the operations and branding of The National Theatre, the J.W. Marriott Hotel, National Place, and One Freedom Plaza are:

- I. Maintaining our Pennsylvania Avenue addresses. In particular, The National Theatre is the oldest continuously operating business on Pennsylvania Avenue and has held a prominent location on the Avenue since 1835.
- II. All four members of the Cohort require direct street access to ensure continuing, uninterrupted operations. The National Theatre productions, out of necessity, load and unload equipment at the front of the theater. The J.W. Marriott Hotel requires a location for taxis and Ubers to allow visitors to access the hotel entrance. One Freedom Plaza's and National Place's main entrances requires short-term parking for pick up and drop off of personnel and visitors.
- III. All members of the Cohort are anxious to improve and energize the sidewalks and the Plaza areas with programmed functions that will enhance the Avenue's experience for residents and visitors, both locally and even internationally.

### **Comments On Each NCPC Concept:**

- a. The Linear Green concept provides street access to the Cohort, although the proposed single lane would become congested or unnavigable when theater productions load in and load out. The programming area of the new Freedom Plaza area could become a vital, dynamic urban space as the largest programmable square footage on the revitalized Avenue. This space could be utilized to host international events and outdoor performances from The National and would add to the vibrancy of downtown with active and passive recreation.
- b. With respect to the Urban Capital concept, there is a concern that the Avenue cutting diagonally through the current Freedom Plaza would decrease ease of pedestrian access to either of the

bowtie plazas, making the programable spaces very difficult. Additionally, the lack of direct street access for the entrances to the Cohort properties would severely impact their business operations.

- c. In the Civic Stage concept, there is concern that the sense of Pennsylvania Avenue's procession would be lost, as it jogs north at 13<sup>th</sup> Street and directs much of the traffic flow to the north of Freedom Plaza. Such a wide avenue in front of our properties would decrease pedestrian access to the Plaza. Additionally, the Avenue would become congested with taxi usage at the J.W. Marriott Hotel and regular production load in and load out at The National.

**The Avenue as a Special Venue:**

Revitalizing Pennsylvania Avenue, and specifically Freedom Plaza, is a matter of great importance to the Cohort. In particular, long overdue attention to enhancing the use of Pennsylvania Avenue as a venue for events and programming is wholly consistent with The National Theatre Foundation's mission of providing free programming for the community. The connectivity of The National and programmable space in Freedom Plaza would provide expanded opportunities for residents and tourists, particularly those staying at the J.W. Marriott Hotel.

**Conclusion:**

In closing, the National Place Cohort is excited about this opportunity to engage in the critical revitalization of Pennsylvania Avenue. We are appreciative of the work that NCPC has completed thus far in moving this initiative forward and we look forward to participating further in the process.

**Public Comments Provided By The National Place Cohort:**

The National Theatre Foundation

Quadrangle Development Corporation, Inc./One Freedom Plaza/National Place Offices and Shops

J.W. Marriott Hotel

Comments have been reviewed by the National Theatre Group, an affiliate of The Nederlander Organization which is the main stage producing partner at The National Theatre

Exhibit A:

